

LANGUAGE

LANGUAGES

- ✚ The official language is **Burmese** which is spoken by about 80 percent of the population of Myanmar. Spoken Burmese has a distinctive rhythmic character. The meaning of a word often depends on the pitch of a certain syllable. For an untrained speaker, correct pronunciation can be quite difficult. It is written using the Burmese script, based on the ancient Pali script.
- ✚ **English is widely spoken**, especially in business and tourist areas. Myanmar is a former British colony, and as a result - and because English is still compulsory in kindergartens and primary schools - many Burmese understand at least some rudimentary English. Most well-educated upper class Burmese are fluent in English, while in the main cities like Yangon and Mandalay, many locals will know enough English for basic communication. Hotel and airline staff, as well as people working in the tourism industry generally speak an acceptable level of English. You may find more English spoken in Myanmar than in Thailand.

DIALECTS

Besides Burmese, **there are more than 100 languages and local dialects spoken in different regions and by different ethnic groups**. There are also many other ethnic groups in Myanmar such as the Mon, Shan, Pa-O and many others who continue to speak their own languages. There is also a sizeable ethnic Chinese community mostly of Yunnan descent, most visible in the city of Mandalay, and many of whom speak Mandarin. Some areas are also home to various ethnic Indian communities who continue to speak various Indian languages. However, with the exception of the elderly, it is rare to find any locals who do not speak Burmese.

COMMON PHRASES

✚ Hello	Min ga la ba
✚ Goodbye	Thwa dau me
✚ Thank you	Kyeizu tin ba de
✚ I (don't) understand	Kya-nau na ma ley bu
✚ Help!	Keh-ba
✚ How much is it?	Diha balao leh?
✚ Yes	Ho de
✚ No	Ma ho bu
✚ Do you speak English?	In glei za ga go pyaw thet de la?
✚ Sorry	Saw-re-be